

THE PEOPLE YOU BUMP INTO! I MET A FISHMONGER IN THE CAMBADOS FISH MARKET, JOSEF REI, WHO USED TO WORK AS A CANE-CUTTER IN NORTHERN QUEENSLAND. HE MISSED THE GALICIAN WINTER AND WENT BACK TO LIVE IN SPAIN BUT WAS STILL THRILLED TO SEE AN AUSTRALIAN. HE WANTED TO GIVE ME SOME AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL BABY MACKEREL. I SAID I HAD NOWHERE TO COOK THEM, SO INSTEAD HE GAVE ME THIS RECIPE FOR COOKING OCTOPUS, WHICH HE REFERRED TO AS 'GALICIA'S NATIONAL FISH'. ITS SIMPLICITY PRODUCES ONE OF THE MOST FLAVOURSOME DISHES. YOU LAY THE THICK LEGS OF OCTOPUS ON THE HOTTEST HOTPLATE YOU CAN MUSTER, THEN, COOKED RAPIDLY IN ITS OWN JUICES UNDER A HEAVY WEIGHT, IT BECOMES TENDER AND SUPER-INTENSELY FLAVOURED. THE JUICES FROM THE GRILLED OCTOPUS ARE USED TO DRESS THE SALAD.

PULPO A LA PLANCHA

OCTOPUS ON THE GRILL

8 MEDIAS RACIONES

6 RACIONES

a whole 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) octopus,
frozen overnight, then thawed

350 g (12 oz) red radishes, trimmed

3 Lebanese (short) cucumbers

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

80 ml (2½ fl oz/⅓ cup) extra virgin
olive oil

juice of 1 lemon

bread, to serve

Remove the head from the octopus and discard.

Heat a flat, lightly oiled barbecue grill plate as hot as it will go. Place the octopus on the grill, then cover with a heavy-based baking tray and sit a heavy weight — such as a cast-iron saucepan — on top. Cook the octopus for 7–10 minutes on each side, then remove from the heat, place in a bowl and allow to cool. Slice the octopus into 2.5 cm (1 inch) chunks and return to the bowl with any juices.

Peel the radishes and cucumbers, leaving on a little skin to add a flash of colour to the plate. Cut the cucumbers in half lengthways, remove the seeds using a small spoon, then thinly slice the flesh. Cut the radishes in half lengthways, then thinly slice and add to the octopus chunks with the cucumber, parsley, olive oil and lemon juice.

Toss gently and check the seasoning. For the best flavour, serve the octopus while it is still warm, with plenty of bread to sop up the juices.

